



**Assistant Secretary for Special Education
and Rehabilitative Services**

Robert H. Pasternack

United States Department of Education

Robert H. Pasternack was sworn in as assistant secretary for special education and rehabilitative services on August 8, 2001. In this position, Pasternack will serve as principal adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Education on all matters related to special education and rehabilitative services.

Prior to being sworn in, Pasternack served as state director of special education for the New Mexico State Department of Education since 1998. He has worked with students with disabilities and their families for more than 25 years, increasing parental involvement in all aspects of education, particularly special education.

As state director, Pasternack led the development and implementation of state regulations for special education and created a variety of statewide initiatives designed to improve results for students with disabilities. These include dropout prevention; a statewide inclusion initiative; research-based professional development; research-based screening and assessment in reading; entrepreneurship programs; mental health in the schools; and various programs targeted toward low incidence disabilities.

Under his leadership in 1999, New Mexico became only the second state in the country to adopt the category of "developmental delay" for children from birth to nine years of age.

Pasternack led the effort to develop the New Mexico Reading Initiative. His efforts ensured that school districts implementing full-day kindergarten programs included scientifically based reading research programs in their extra half-day of instruction. In 2001, he was asked to replicate New Mexico's successful initiative for the six states belonging to the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center and 23 states served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Pasternack was honored by the BIA in 2000 for his efforts to meet the needs of Native American children with disabilities. A bilingual speaker, he has served since 1999 on a five-member United States delegation appointed to assist the Mexican government in developing their system of special education and related services.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, he holds a Ph.D. in special education, with a minor in neuropsychology, from the University of New Mexico, a master's degree in guidance and counseling from New Mexico Highlands University and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of South Florida. He is a nationally certified school psychologist, certified educational diagnostician, licensed special education teacher for grades K-12 and licensed school administrator.

Pasternack chaired the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, a position he held for three years, and served on the Interagency Coordinating Council, State IDEA Advisory Panel, State Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council and Governor's Mental Health Planning Council. He recently served on the Governor's Advisory Committee on Preventing School Violence in New Mexico.

He was chief executive officer of New Mexico's first licensed Comprehensive Children's Community Mental Health Center from 1993 to 1998, was superintendent of the New Mexico Boys' School from 1990 to 1993 and school psychologist from 1980 to 1993 (the Boys' School is the state institution for adjudicated delinquents). He also started New Mexico's first Residential Treatment Center in 1978.

Pasternack's career has placed him in a variety of leadership roles including director of clinical services for Taos/Colfax Community Service, Inc., in Taos; instructor at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, N.M.; president of ENSENAR Health Services, Inc., in Taos; educational diagnostician for Taos Municipal Schools; school psychologist for Northern Pueblos Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, in Taos; clinical director for Ranchos Treatment Center in Taos; diagnostic consultant for the Los Lunas Hospital & Training School in Los Lunas, N.M.; executive director of Villa Santa Maria in Cedar Crest, N.M.; and administrative intern for the former Bureau of Education of the Handicapped (BEH), Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Interestingly, Pasternack's internship experience before completing his doctorate from college was with BEH, since renamed the Office of Special Education Programs and now housed in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, the agency he currently directs.

Pasternack has received numerous awards and recognition and has been repeatedly included in Who's Who in the West, Who's Who in America and Who's Who in Medicine and Health Care.

Pasternack has lifelong personal experience with people with disabilities. For nearly 20 years, he has served as the legal guardian for his brother, who was born with Down syndrome. Pasternack also has two daughters, Shayla and Rachel, and two grandchildren.